



**PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)**  
**PROJECT TYPE: Medium-sized Project**  
**TYPE OF TRUST FUND: GEF Trust Fund**

**PART I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION**

<b>Project Title:</b>	Improving the coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan Mountains		
<b>Country:</b>	Kyrgyzstan	<b>GEF Project ID:</b>	TBD
<b>GEF Agency:</b>	UNDP	<b>GEF Agency Project ID:</b>	4934
<b>Other Executing Partner(s):</b>	State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry	<b>Submission Date:</b>	March 26, 2012
<b>GEF Focal Area (s):</b>	Biodiversity	<b>Project Duration:</b>	48 months
<b>Name of parent program:</b> For SFM/REDD+ <input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<b>Agency Fee:</b>	US\$ 95,000

**A. FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK:**

<b>Focal Area Objectives</b>	<b>FA Outcomes</b>	<b>FA Outputs</b>	<b>Trust Fund</b>	<b>Indicative financing from relevant TF, (\$)</b>	<b>Indicative co-financing, (\$)</b>
BD-1	Outcome 1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.	Output 2. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected threatened species (number)	GEFTF	855,000	3,780,000
Project management cost			GEFTF	95,000	420,000
<b>Total project costs</b>				<b>950,000</b>	<b>4,200,000</b>

**B. Project Framework**

<b>Project Objective:</b> To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system						
<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Grant type</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>Expected Outputs</b>	<b>Trust Fund</b>	<b>Financing from relevant TF, (\$)</b>	<b>Indicative co-financing, (\$)</b>
1. Threatened species representation is improved by increasing coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan	TA	<p><b>Improved</b> representation of habitats of threatened species of Central Tian Shan in the national PA system by 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National PA coverage up from current 6.3% to c.7%</li> <li>- Representation of endangered snow leopard habitat and that of other vulnerable, threatened, and endangered species in the PA system in Central Tian Shan up from c. 20% to 48%</li> </ul> <p><b>Improvement</b> in the capacities of PA staff and in overall management effectiveness of Khan Tengri National Park and Sarychat-Ertash National Reserve (METT score increase by 25%).</p> <p><b>Enhanced conservation status</b> of Central Tian</p>	<p>1.1. Establishment of a new national park covering 187,000 hectares in Khan Tengri region: PA boundaries delineated; PA infrastructure, equipment and human resources put in place capable to manage the PA.</p> <p>1.2. Patrolling, enforcement and surveillance systems strengthened:</p> <p>1.2.1. at the Sarychat-Ertash National Park (existing PA) through establishment of joint anti-poaching teams between Park authorities and local communities (horse-mounted rangers groups);</p> <p>1.2.2. at Khan Tengri PA (new PA) through creation of a Local Management Board and joint ranger groups to enforce anti-poaching, fire prevention, resource use regulations, control over species and habitat management activities.</p> <p>1.3 Vocational training for staff from the new and existing PA to ensure that they can effectively fulfill management objectives. This will be undertaken in collaboration with WWF. The first series of training workshops will focus on PAs from Tian Shan with subsequent</p>	GEFTF	350,000	1,400,000

<b>Project Objective:</b> To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system						
<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Grant type</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>Expected Outputs</b>	<b>Trust Fund</b>	<b>Financing from relevant TF, (\$)</b>	<b>Indicative co-financing, (\$)</b>
		Shan ecosystems ensures stability of threatened and indicator species (see Global Benefits table under B.2 for species list)	extension to other PAs (hosted and co-financed by WWF) 1.4 METT introduced at the 2 protected areas in Central Tian Shan and from year 3 accepted by State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry as a widespread tool for gauging the effectiveness of and reporting on PA functions and management of PAs in the rest of the country.			
2. Habitat connectivity, sustainability and effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes	Inv.	<p><b>Reconciliation of economic activities with conservation</b> in sensitive buffer areas and corridors ensuring safe passage of snow leopard and ungulates over c. 200,000 hectares</p> <p><b>Reduced threats and disturbance at nesting/ breeding and foraging sites</b> for snow leopard, ungulates and threatened birds-of-prey</p> <p>A <b>30% reduction</b> in poaching and illegal logging at targeted PAs</p> <p><b>Increase in incomes</b> of local communities from biodiversity-compatible activities (c. 10-15% rise in income compared to baseline; this is average increase reported by households under past and current UNDP poverty reduction programs, measured before and after UNDP interventions through socio-economic studies.)</p>	<p>2.1 Amendments to the Law on Protected Areas to legally define the procedures for the establishment, operation and enforcement of PA buffer zones and wildlife corridors taking into account local community needs and land use rights.</p> <p>2.2 Identification and designation of buffer zones for the new PA at Khan Tengri and wildlife corridors between Khan Tengri and Sarychat-Ertash NR where land use is to be regulated.</p> <p>2.3 Conservation management objectives of the PAs, buffer zones and corridors to be better aligned with territorial land use plans of 5 adjoining rural districts, with modifications being made to the latter as needed. Based on a biophysical and socio-economic resource mapping to understand the potential of the various eco zones, modifications to land use plans could include activities such as upgrade of the status of high value forests adjacent to Khan Tengri PA, restoration and maintenance of access roads to raise the mobility of livestock and balance livestock grazing pressure in mountain ecosystems, rehabilitation of degraded rangelands through improved local pasture management plans, and introduction of regulated timing, places and methods of hunting.</p> <p>2.4 Based on extensive consultation with local communities, agreements are reached with local land users on modified patterns of resource use, and a system is in place for enforcement of new regulations with the engagement of district environmental inspectors. Enforcement of regulations is monitored and reported using METT (qq.21-25 dealing with wider landscape integration of PAs.)</p> <p>2.5 Alternative livelihoods program for local communities designed and</p>	GEFTF	505,000	2,380,000

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Project Component	Grant type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Financing from relevant TF, (\$)	Indicative co-financing, (\$)
			<p>launched to support apiculture, yak breeding, and community-based ecotourism. Support will be provided through the operational micro-credit mechanism of the Area Based Development program of UNDP (which is one of the baseline programs, further described in the text). Support will be provided to approximately 20% of rural communities in and around target PAs.</p> <p>2.6 Training workshops conducted for local authorities from other districts spanning the Tian Shan Mountains on how to account for biodiversity conservation considerations in spatial planning and on enforcement of regulations, using the experience of the Khan Tengri and Sarychat-Ertash PAs. (hosted by President's Management Academy)</p>			
Project management cost					95,000	420,000
<b>Total project costs</b>					<b>950,000</b>	<b>4,200,000</b>

### C. INDICATIVE CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE AND BY NAME IF AVAILABLE, (\$)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount (\$)
National Government	State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry	Grant	800,000
National Government	Issyk-Kul Province Development Fund	Grant	400,000
National Government	General Directorate of the Issyk-Kul Biosphere Reserve	Grant	350,000
National Government	State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry	In-kind	800,000
Other	Republic Nature Protection Fund	Grant	150,000
NGO	WWF	Grant	50,000
NGO	Snow Leopard Trust	Grant	50,000
Multilateral Agency (ies)	UNDP	Grant	1,600,000
<b>Total Co-financing</b>			<b>4,200,000</b>

**D. GEF RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY:** Not applicable.

## **PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**

### **A. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:**

#### **A.1. THE GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES:**

The proposed project advances GEF's Biodiversity Objective 1 "Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems" (BD1). Within this objective the project focuses specifically on "expanding threatened species representation" by supporting the creation and effective management of new protected areas that extends the coverage of threatened species in the national protected area system and improves the coverage of their spatial range. Component I is designed to increase the coverage of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan which harbors several globally vulnerable, threatened and endangered species including the snow leopard. At present, less than 20% of the range of the snow leopard in Central Tian Shan is under protection and the project will increase this coverage by establishing a new protected area (PA) spanning 187,000 hectares raising the share to 48% (see Section B.2 for details). Component II focuses on improving the connectivity between the new PA and the existing Sarychat-Ertash PA in Central Tian Shan through designation and effective management of buffer zones and wildlife corridors, which, in turn, will enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of PAs through better regulation of land and natural resource use around PAs. Local communities will be supported in biodiversity-compatible income generation to enable them to observe the modified patterns of land use.

Livelihoods support will be provided in partnership with the UNDP-managed Area Based Development program, aimed at providing sustainable funding to local communities for biodiversity-friendly livelihoods. This adds to the innovative character and cost-effectiveness of the project, and is also one of the ways to ensure the continuity of funding for biodiversity-friendly businesses in and around PAs in Kyrgyzstan. The GEF investment will strengthen the national PA system overall, by adding into it high-value areas of Central Tian Shan, which have suffered from lack of protection or suboptimal management due to national resource constraint. The project will increase the overall national PA coverage from 6.3 to c.7%. By focusing on the connectivity, the project addresses Decision X/31 of the CBD COP-10 in Nagoya which requires countries to promote the application of the ecosystem approach that integrates protected areas into broader land and/or seascapes for effective conservation of biological diversity.

## **A.2. NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS OR REPORTS AND ASSESSMENTS UNDER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS:**

This project has been identified as a priority initiative under the national GEF-5 portfolio planning exercise completed in December 2011. It has been endorsed officially by the cross-sectoral working group of the GEF planning process on 30 November, 2011. It is in line with Kyrgyzstan's *National Mid-Term Development Plan* which emphasizes the importance of protected areas, especially in mountain regions. It is further in line with national biodiversity conservation priorities which are defined in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Report to the CBD. The report identifies the expansion of protected areas to 8% of national territory as a national priority for transitioning to sustainable development. The project advances Goals A.1 (creation of protected areas), and A.6 (restoration and maintenance of critical landscapes and species) of the 2002 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The project will assist Kyrgyzstan in implementing relevant aspects of the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas. The need for conservation of the biodiversity of Tian Shan is prominent in the country's report under most Goals of the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas. Further, the project's focus on the high mountains of Central Tian Shan is in line with the National Environmental Report (draft, Dec.2011) which reiterates that high mountains are islands of biological richness amidst relatively poorer plain areas and that protected areas play a key role in the conservation and management of that biodiversity.

## **B. PROJECT OVERVIEW**

### **B.1. DESCRIBE THE BASELINE PROJECT AND THE PROBLEM THAT IT SEEKS TO ADDRESS:**

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country situated in the center of Eurasia and spanning an area of 199,900 square kilometers<sup>1</sup>. It is bordered by Kazakhstan to the north, China to the east and south-east, Tajikistan to the south-west and Uzbekistan to the west. Altitudes range from 132 to 7,439 meters above sea level, with the mountain system of the Tian Shan (merging into the Pamir-Alay in the south-west) accounting for approximately 90% of the country's area.<sup>2</sup> The Tian Shan's highest peaks are found in Central Tian Shan where the country's territory meets Kazakhstan and China. The highest peak is Pobeda (7,439m), which is also the highest point in the country. The second highest peak, Khan Tengri (7,010m), is located a short distance to the north. In terms of administrative boundaries, the Central Tian Shan falls within the Issyk Kul province<sup>3</sup>. The Tian Shan Mountains in Kyrgyzstan are generally described in several segments as follows: Northern Tian Shan (Chyi valley and Kungei Alatau), Central Tian Shan (Syrtys of Issyk Kul province), Inner Tian Shan (Naryn province), West and South-west Tian Shan (Osh and Jalal Abad provinces).

Kyrgyzstan acts as a natural barrier between flora and fauna of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China, which are different biogeographic provinces. On the other hand, the Tian Shan and Alay ranges act as a bridge connecting fauna and flora of Himalayas and Hindu Kush across Pamir with biota of Siberia, and across Dzungar Ala-Tau and Altay with biota of Mongolia. These two factors result in an extreme and unique combination of different fauna and flora elements, and underpin the significance of the biodiversity of Kyrgyzstan and the need for its conservation in the regional context<sup>4</sup>.

The country exhibits a rich diversity of natural resources – species, ecosystems, and land forms. Covering only 0.13% of the globe's surface, Kyrgyzstan is home to about 1% of all known species. Several rare and endangered species of flora and fauna have been included in the Red Book of the Kyrgyz Republic<sup>5</sup> -- 53 species of birds, 26 mammals, 2 amphibians, 8 reptiles, 7 species of fish, 18 arthropods, and 89 higher plant species. Many species of animals such as dhole (*Cuon alpinus*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), Goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), great bustard (*Otis tarda L.*), and imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) are practically not being registered any more. The wild pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) is critically endangered. Rare species such as the grey monitor lizard (*Varanus griseus*), ibisbill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*), marbled polecat (*Vormella peregusna negans*), snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), and the Tian Shan brown bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*) remain in an extremely dangerous situation. Species such as the Snow leopard, Menzbir marmot, Red wolf, Goitered gazelle, and Bar-headed goose are recorded in the national Red Book<sup>6</sup>.

The compound high altitude relief of Kyrgyzstan situated in the southern part of the temperate zone creates favorable conditions for existence of all main types of natural ecosystems, ranging from deserts to high altitude mountainous tundra. There are 20 classes of ecosystems. The diversity of ecosystems, however, is unevenly distributed within the country, being more richly

<sup>1</sup> Atlas of Kyrgyz SSR, Nature conditions and resources – State Administration of Geodesy and Cartography.– Ö.1.–1987

<sup>2</sup> Kyrgyz Republic Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Bishkek, November 1998

<sup>3</sup> The country is divided into 7 provinces (*Batken, Chuy, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Osh, Talas, and Issyk Kul*) and 2 independent cities/ *shaars* (Bishkek, Osh).

<sup>4</sup> Shukurov E.D., Balbakova F.N. SPNAs of Kyrgyzstan and conservation of biodiversity of Tien Shan-Alai mountain construction. // Materials of ecological conferences and workshops. Bishkek, 2002. p. 43-41.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution of the Government of the KR «On approval of the list of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna to include into the Red book of the Kyrgyz Republic» as of April 28, 2005, N 170

<sup>6</sup> Red Book of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 2007

represented in the Western Tian Shan and Central Tian Shan biogeographical regions, each having 16 out of 20 classes of ecosystems, or 72.7% of their whole diversity<sup>7</sup>. The rich diversity of plant and animal wealth can be attributed to the high mountainous systems of Tian Shan and Pamir-Alay that reach up to 7,000 kilometers above sea level and accumulate moisture from the upper reaches of the atmosphere. High mountains are islands of biological diversity among monotonous plains.

**Biodiversity significance of Central Tian Shan:** Forests cover just 6.8% of the country, with most of it in the Tian Shan Mountains. The relict Shrenk's Spruce forests (*Picea schrenkiana*) are endemic and have global significance as these are among the world's last massifs of virgin coniferous forests. The Tian Shan Mountains provide ideal habitat for the endangered Snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*). Snow leopards are usually found between 3,000 and 5,400 meters above sea level where the environment is harsh and forbidding, the climate is cold and dry, and the mountain slopes sparsely vegetated with grasses and small shrubs, providing good cover and clear views to help them sneak up on their prey. The area is also home to ungulates that are the prey of the Snow leopard such as the Argali (*Ovis ammon*; IUCN status: near-threatened), Ibex (*Capra ibex*), and Tian Shan Maral (*Cervus elaphus*). In terms of avifauna, Central Tian Shan is home to Ibisbill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*; noted as a rare species whose situation is extremely dangerous in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Report to the CBD), Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*; IUCN status: vulnerable), Himalayan griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*), Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*; listed as near-threatened in national Red Book), Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*; IUCN status: near-threatened), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*; listed as near-threatened in national Red Book), Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*; listed as near-threatened in national Red Book), Demoiselle-Crane (*Anthropoides virgo*; listed as near-threatened in national Red Book), Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*; listed as near-threatened in national Red Book), Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*; IUCN status: vulnerable; CITES Appendix I) and Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*; listed as vulnerable in national Red Book). Central Tian Shan has 31 endemic non-vertebrate species, including the largest representative of Holarctic species viz., Merzbacher's Apollo Butterfly (*Parnassius Apollo merzbacher*; listed LR in national Red Book), and Chalepoxenus-leonomyrma (*Leptothorax longipilosus*). There are 11 endemic vascular plant species including the Edelweiss-like Pyrethrum (*Pyrethrum leontopodium*; listed as vulnerable in the national Red Book). The impressive total species diversity of Tian Shan, together with abundance of endemics and high altitudinal variations define high rate of species turnover across habitats (high  $\beta$ -diversity). Central Tian Shan's mountain forest catchments provide water resources for almost one third of the country and millions of hectares in neighboring countries and it is sometimes referred to as a natural water tower for Central Asia. Central Tian Shan belongs to the Global 200 Ecoregions list, and has a number of Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

**Threats:** The high mountain ecosystem of Central Tian Shan, however, continues to face increasing threats. The shrinking area of relict spruce forests in Central Tian Shan (dominated by endemic *Picea schrenkiana*) is a major issue, having already shrunk by 50% in the past 50 years. Weak protection and unjustifiably high volumes of sanitary cuts lead to harvesting of mature and over-mature spruce stands. Harvesting of over-mature trees, which is legally permitted in unprotected areas, removes ecologically important trees, destroys surrounding vegetation as a result of extensive construction of drive-up roads, deprives the ecosystem of its naturalness and impairs its resilience to anthropogenic and natural stress, such as the increasing climate aridization observed in Central Asia. Natural regeneration and reforestation volumes are much below the rates of forest degradation.

The other major threat to the mountain ecosystem of Central Tian Shan is from biodiversity-incompatible activities of local communities. Snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) habitat in Central Tian Shan is subject to extensive, uncontrolled agro-pastoral land use. Vast grasslands, which are habitats of snow leopard and its prey, are used as pastures (areas of Karkyra, Chymyndy Say, Sary Djaz, etc.). Due to poor regulation of pasture use, there is disproportionately high pressure on easily accessible grasslands closer to dwellings and almost no grazing in remote areas, and there are a disproportionately higher number of large cattle to small cattle. Extensive unregulated use of mountainous grasslands for livestock grazing is a disturbance to wild ungulates such as argali and ibex. Competition with livestock for forage is one of the most widespread causes of ungulate decline. Reduced populations of ungulates, in turn, result in a decline in populations of snow leopards and birds-of-prey. A reduction of the wild prey base because of poaching is also significant in many parts of the snow leopard range (argali and ibex are threatened by poaching).

Mining is an emerging threat. The biodiversity working group of the 2011 National Environmental Report noted that there is an alarming trend of mining companies (especially gold mining) lobbying for de-classification of existing PAs and opposing new PAs in Tian Shan in an attempt to get hold of land for expansion of mining activities. As an example, there have recently been moves to de-classify up to 40,000 ha in one of the existing PAs, although the Land Register still has not issued the necessary re-classification approvals. This process is un-participatory and presents a significant potential threat to large mammals and other wildlife of Tian Shan, unless the country's PA system is strengthened.

**Protected Area System:** To conserve the nation's biological wealth, the government has established a system of Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA) that consists of 86 PAs covering 6.3% of the country<sup>8</sup>. This includes three categories of PAs (strict reserves, national parks and regulated reserves), all of which are under the direct or indirect responsibility of the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry. Of these three categories, the most important for nature conservation are the first two which have administrative offices within or in the vicinity of the PAs, as well as rangers ('inspectors') patrolling within the PAs. One of the key weaknesses of the system of SPNAs is that it does not provide adequate coverage for the spatial range of threatened species, most notably the snow leopard and argali. The government has established a number of protected areas in the Tian Shan Mountains. However, coverage is uneven across various sections. Most of the emphasis has been placed on the northern and

<sup>7</sup> Fourth National Report on Conservation of Biodiversity of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 2008

<sup>8</sup> State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry

western Tian Shan heretofore. There are 5 PAs covering over 15% of northern Tian Shan, 10 PAs in western Tian Shan covering over 18%, and only 1 PA in Central Tian Shan covering less than 6%. This is a major gap in terms of protection of several threatened/ flagship species. The one PA that provides protection to snow leopard habitat in the Central Tian Shan is the Sarychat-Ertash State Nature Reserve that extends over 134,000 hectares (including the buffer zone). This, however, is less than 20% of the snow leopard range and the range of its migrating prey in the Central Tian Shan. Further, only 8.3% of the endemic Shrenk's Spruce forest in Central Tian Shan is currently protected, compared to over 12% for broadleaf forests and alpine-nival ecosystems. Due to the poor coverage of PAs in Central Tian Shan, habitats of a substantial number of threatened mammals, birds and flora (listed in the *Incremental cost reasoning* matrix) are not well-protected.

**Baseline programs:** The key baseline element related to PAs has been estimated at USD 5,917,000 over the four year duration of the proposed project which represents the national investment in the PA system as a whole. This financing comes from the state budget, special Republican Fund for Nature Protection (RFNP), and Local Funds for Nature Protection (LFNP). Over 80% of the funding is allocated to support protected area staff (including forest guard and patrolling); the remainder supports basic PA infrastructure, and limited research activities. The baseline funding for protected areas in Central Tien Shan amounts to app. USD 0.8 mln over the four year duration of the project, which covers salaries of PAs, basic infrastructure, as well as limited nature tourism. Additionally, research on programs on rare and endemic species will be financed by the General Directorate of the Issyk-Kul Biosphere Reserves in the amount of USD 0.35 mln over the course of the project. Further, approximately USD 0.8 mln will, over the course of the project, be allocated for conservation and reproduction of the endemic Shrenk Spruce, support to forest guard services and patrolling. Financing of awareness raising and PR activities at the targeted PAs in Central Tian Shat will amount to app. USD 0.4 mln over the project duration.

In terms of socio-economic development programs, an important initiative in the baseline scenario is going to be the “Area-based Development (ABD) for Peace and Sustainable Development in Kyrgyzstan” that will run from 2012-2014, and is funded by UNDP, the Kyrgyz Government, and bilateral donors (overall budget is around USD 8 million). The objective is to integrate the principles of social cohesion, entrepreneurship, and green development in territorial planning at village and district levels. The program will work in 10 pilot provinces in the country, including the Issyk-Kul Province of the Central Tian Shan landscape. It will support consolidation of village and district development plans, incorporating among other things, the principle of compliance with ecosystem carrying capacity. Pillar 2 of the ABD program will facilitate sustainable income-generation in rural areas. Specifically, it envisages establishment of district-level investment funds to support community-driven economic initiatives, as well as support to business-incubators to encourage proliferation of green and socially responsible projects. The terms of micro-credit and subsidy provided from these investment funds will be defined in the first half of 2012 by UNDP and government experts upon careful market analysis. The funds will be complemented by financial support to flow of goods and services between rural and urban areas, development of rural infrastructure, and assistance to associations of small and medium businesses in rural areas.

These initiatives in the baseline scenario are significant insofar as they provide basic support for at least one PA in the Central Tian Shan and a framework for socio-economic development for local communities. However, the territorial coverage of protected areas and buffer zones remains inadequate from a conservation perspective and local communities continue to pursue biodiversity-incompatible livelihoods that undermine conservation efforts.

The long-term solution needs to take a more strategic, landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management in the Central Tian Shan landscape. A larger share of high mountain habitats in the Central Tian Shan that are critical for the survival of globally threatened species (Snow leopard, Argali, Corncrake, and Chalepoxenus-leonomyrma) needs to be brought under effective protection through well-managed strict conservation areas surrounded by buffer zones and connected by wildlife corridors where land use is regulated in ways that balance conservation and socio-economic needs. The solution relies on three key elements. The first of these deals with expansion of core conservation areas so that a greater spatial range of flagship species and area of relict forest ecosystems is under strict protection. Secondly, the solution depends on a high degree of integration of these protected areas with buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other areas of the broader landscape. Thirdly, the solution depends on capacity building within institutions and communities. The key barriers to the long-term solution are described below.

**Barrier 1:** The lone protected area in the Central Tian Shan, Sarychat-Ertash, only covers a fraction of critical habitats. It covers less than 20% of the habitat of the snow leopard and leaves out large swaths of relict, endemic Shrenk's Spruce forests. The unprotected blocks of the remaining relict spruce forest of Central Tian Shan are home to the largest populations of the Snow leopard, Argali, Barbary Falcon, many other vulnerable and threatened mammal and bird species, 31 endemic invertebrates and a number of rare plants. Absence of formal protection for the relict spruce forest results in their abuse and ultimate degradation. In addition, the alpine grassland ecosystems between the spruce forest blocks are not protected. These are important for the survival of under-protected global species, since they are important for wildlife passage and as forage areas. These areas are key for the stability of Argali (*Ovis ammon*) and Tian Shan Maral (*Cervus elaphus*), which – apart from their IUCN importance – are important prey of the snow leopard. Therefore, to achieve effective protection of these species, the relict spruce forest blocks in Tian Shan need to be protected together with alpine grassland ecosystems. Yet, over 60% of these ecosystems in Tian Shan are currently unprotected. Even within the existing PA, management effectiveness is sub-optimal, enforcement and surveillance capacities are weak and there is no engagement of local communities in them. The mentality of the PA professionals at various levels, from the State Agency to rangers, is largely dominated by the Soviet protected area school of thought, which promotes strict resource protection, and exclusion of communities from conservation areas and PA planning and management. A concept of “collaborative forest management” was introduced in law in 2011, defining procedures and modalities for planning the use of

forest resources (as well as resources of non-forest ecosystems adjacent to forests) so as to obtain benefits for communities from protection and use of forest resources. Although this was put in law, this practice has not been tested in reality. In forest protected areas communities have not been part of decision making bodies and have not had a chance to discuss regulations of activities, and ultimately implementing these jointly with PAs. An emphasis on engaging communities and providing them with alternative resource uses has not been part of their professional training, and this conservatism has contributed to hostility of communities towards PAs. This in turn could explain the relatively low share of PAs designated so far, and why moves to increase PA coverage have been slow.

**Barrier 2:** The existing PA is not aligned with land use planning in the wider landscape for effective habitat conservation. Corridors providing for wildlife passage to key habitats outside the protected area are lacking and buffer zones are not effectively managed to restrict biodiversity-incompatible uses. The status of locally migrating mammals depends on a landscape-level approach to conservation, combining strict conservation in the breeding/ nesting areas with sustainable use in the wildlife passage/ forage areas. The discussion on amending the Law on Protected Areas to account for buffer zones and corridors has only recently commenced in Kyrgyzstan. For example, the design of several PAs and conservation activities at existing PAs in Tian Shan focus on selective biotopes (e.g. spruce forests only), without limiting economic activities in the adjacent alpine grassland ecosystems on which mammals depend for passage. The snow leopard requires a large range as it migrates locally with the changing seasons, movements of argali and ibex, and during the propagation season. Also, the new generation of snow leopards needs vast, empty areas of habitat. Because of such fragmentation in the conservation approach within the Tian Shan landscape, conservation of snow leopard and associated threatened migrating ungulates (Argali) has been ineffective, both from PA cost-effectiveness perspective, as well as from the perspective of ungulate population sustainability. In yet another example, while monotonous relict spruce forest blocks over 200 ha have been recognized in national PA policies as “core conservation areas” requiring strict protection, many small scattered forest patches of up to 200 ha each continue to be used with no control over sanitary felling and harvest of over-mature spruce trees. This approach pays no heed to the fact that large mammals such as the snow leopard require large-scale intact habitat areas. Land and natural resource use in such small forest parcels located in the buffer areas need to be restricted. The land-use plans of neighboring districts include forestry, grazing, and hunting activities that come into conflict with the ecological needs of threatened species in Central Tian Shan. Local communities do not have support for biodiversity-friendly alternatives to poaching, removal of forests and uncontrolled pasture use. Furthermore, while land-users near PAs in Central Tian Shan depend on the use of PA resources, they are neither fully aware of nor have been able to capitalize on the value of biodiversity and ecosystems for the local economy.

## **B. 2. INCREMENTAL COST REASONING AND THE ASSOCIATED GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO BE DELIVERED BY THE PROJECT:**

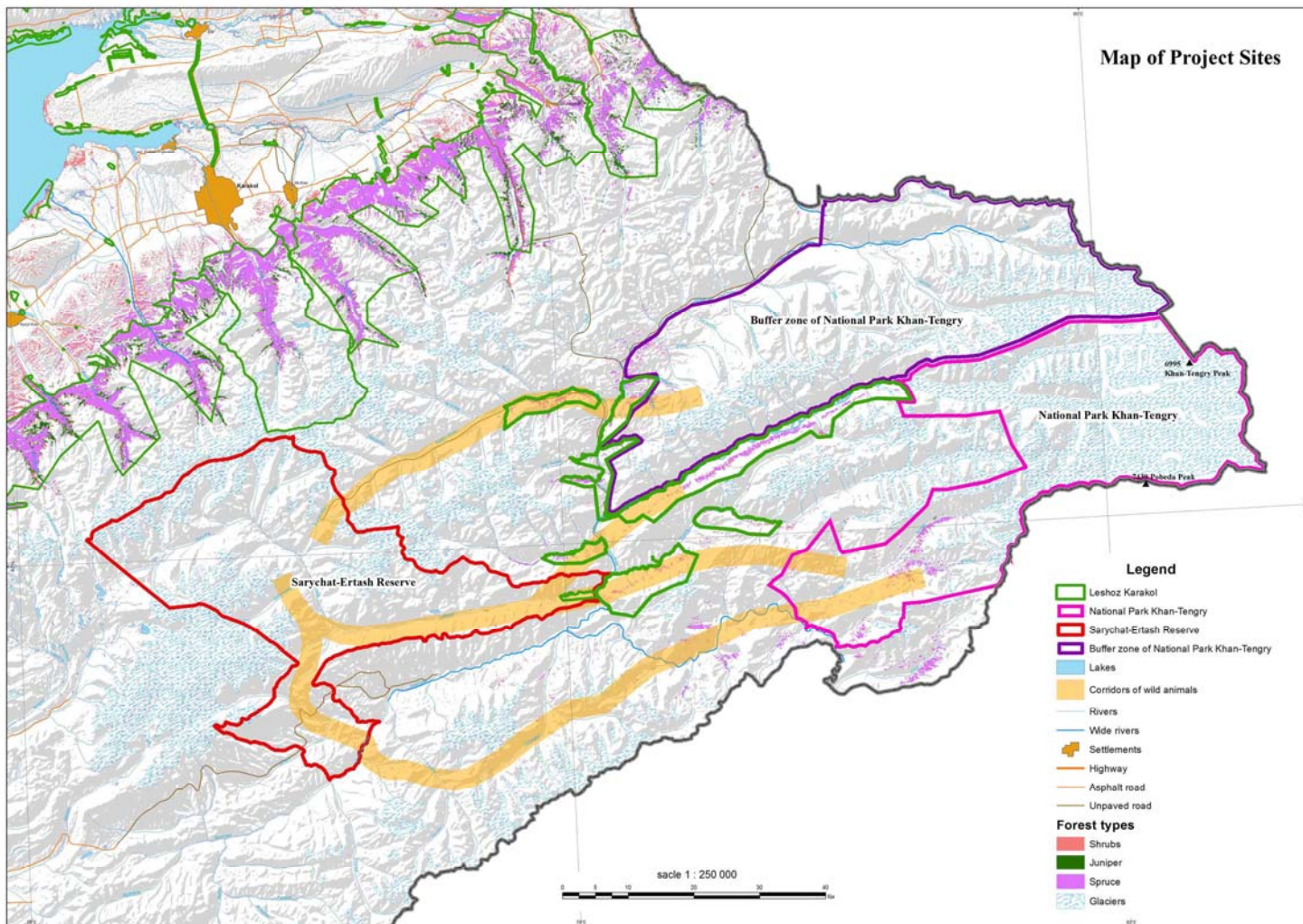
Project objective, outcomes and outputs: The objective of the project is to enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important ecosystems of Central Tian Shan by expanding their coverage and management effectiveness, better integrating them with land use in the wider landscape through an emphasis on well-managed buffer zones and wildlife corridors, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in PAs.

**Component 1** targets the first barrier to realizing a strategic, landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management in Central Tian Shan. A new PA will be established in the Khan Tengri area spanning 187,000 hectares, which is 25-30 km from the existing Sarychat-Ertash PA. Technical assistance and financial support will be provided for designing (including assessment of conservation priorities e.g. identification of threatened areas, wildlife movement patterns), management planning (e.g., development of threat-reduction activities), monitoring and reporting. The surveillance and enforcement systems at both Khan Tengri and Sarychat-Ertash will be strengthened (e.g., establish and equip patrolling groups with means for surveillance, interception, and prosecution to ensure adequate enforcement). Greater emphasis will be placed on local community involvement in PA management by providing a forum for stakeholder participation in the local PA Board. While there are no examples of formal PA co-management in Kyrgyzstan, the practice of collaborative forest management has been introduced in productive forestry in 2011. Procedures and modalities are in place promoting mutual benefits in terms of protection and sustainable use of resources and this experience is promising for enhancing community participation in PA management under this component and in management of buffer zones and corridors (component 2). The capacities of PA staff at the new PA and the existing PA (Sarychat-Ertash Nature Reserve) will be developed so that they can effectively fulfill management objectives. Building on the experience of other GEF-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan, a PA staff training programme will be specifically designed covering all aspects of PA operations specific to mountain ecosystems, ensuring rangers and other field staff has necessary competencies for planning, administration, conflict resolution and enforcement. The METT will be used as a tool for gauging the effectiveness of PA functions at both the newly established and existing PA in Central Tian Shan. This will then be used as a spring-board for widespread application of the tool at all PAs in the country through formal adoption of it by the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forests.

**Component 2** targets the second barrier to realizing a strategic, landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management in the Central Tian Shan landscape namely the lack of continuity and congruence between conservation actions within the confines of a PA and activities occurring adjacent to PAs. It will increase the sustainability of the PAs by enhancing the conservation-friendliness of intervening landscape areas. Following amendments to the Law on Protected Areas to explicitly recognize buffer zones and corridors, such areas will be identified and designated around the new and existing PAs, ensuring connectivity between the two. At present, resource use in the buffer zones and corridors conflicts with conservation needs. Through

this component, conservation management objectives of the PAs, buffer zones and corridors will be better aligned with territorial land use plans of 5 adjoining rural districts, with modifications being made to the latter as needed. This will require a biophysical and socio-economic resource mapping to understand the potential of the various eco zones for livestock, restoration and maintenance of access roads to raise the mobility of livestock and balance livestock grazing pressure in mountain ecosystems, and rehabilitation of degraded rangelands over 50,000 ha through improved local pasture management plans. The status of high value forests will be upgraded so as to avoid logging and ensure that the forest is used in line with biodiversity conservation principles. The total landscape area under conservation management will reach approximately 200,000 hectares, which includes the area of the 5 adjoining rural districts in the buffer zones of the two protected areas and the area of the corridor connecting the two PAs (app.25-30 km long). Agreements will be reached with land users on modified resource use in the buffer zones and corridors centered on sustainable economic activities, such as managed hunting areas and ecotourism. Ecotourism offers an opportunity for local communities to obtain economic benefits given that the Central Tian Shan area contains some of the highest peaks and is famous for mountain tourism. WWF has had great success in organizing community-based ecotourism in other parts of the country, and the project will work with WWF to tailor its experience to Central Tian Shan. To relieve pressures from local communities, other alternative livelihoods to be promoted include apiculture, processing of non-wood forest products (berries, mushrooms, medicinal herbs), and yak breeding for generating food and non-food items. These activities have proved viable through small-scale demonstration projects in other parts of the country implemented by WWF. The project will use the operational micro-credit mechanism of the Area Based Development program of UNDP to support approximately 20% of communities in and around the target PAs. UNDP has reports of feasibility of similar small-business support programs under its poverty reduction programs in other parts of the country. The feasibility of increasing the incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible activities by c. 10-15% is realistic; this assessment is based on reports of households collected by similar initiatives, measured before and after UNDP interventions. Yet, a detailed feasibility analysis for the alternative livelihoods scheme will be implemented at the PPG stage. The experience with aligning management of PAs, buffer zones and corridors with district-level spatial planning will be disseminated throughout the region by means of a training course for local authorities on how to account for biodiversity in spatial planning as well as on enforcement of regulations.

Fig.1 Map of project sites





Incremental cost reasoning and accruing global environmental benefits. The project will add incremental value to the baseline programs relevant for the protected area system in Central Tian Shan, thereby generating biodiversity benefits that are presented in the table below:

Situation resulting from baseline	Alternative to be put in place by the project	Global benefits
<p>With current funding priorities under the Natural Resources Management baseline program, funding will be sufficient to cover the support of existing PAs, but insufficient to expand protection onto under-represented species and ecosystems. No integration of PAs in wider landscape will happen in Central Tian Shan. With support from the ABD baseline program, community engagement in green businesses will focus on organic agriculture and energy efficiency, but will be limited with respect to activities in and around PAs.</p> <p>About 20% of the currently unprotected alpine steppe ecosystems and 35% of the relict spruce forest ecosystems in Central Tian Shan are predicted to degrade in the next 10 years caused by uncontrolled arable farming, excessive grazing, poaching and unregulated logging.</p> <p>Populations of threatened mammals present in the Tian Shan landscape, Snow leopard (<i>Uncia uncia</i>), Argali (<i>Ovis ammon</i>), Tian Shan Maral (<i>Cervus elaphus</i>), Eurasian lynx (<i>Linx linx</i>), as well as birds (e.g. Barbary Falcon (<i>Falco pelegrionides</i>), Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>)), are likely to fall.</p> <p>Endemic vegetation communities, especially the threatened endemic Shrenk's Spruce forests (<i>Picea schrenkiana</i>), might lose up to 30% of their current coverage, resulting from unabated economic activities in the surrounding landscapes (caused by practices listed in the threat analysis above).</p>	<p>PA system has better threatened species representation notably by improving habitat coverage of snow leopard and other endangered species. At least 187,000 ha of under-represented relict spruce forests and habitat of under-represented globally threatened species put under protection by 2016, with PA management units fully capacitated for effective management.</p> <p>Compliance of economic resource-users with biodiversity standards is monitored and enforced in and around the newly established and existing PAs.</p> <p>Species and habitat integrity within PAs barred from negative surrounding influence through buffer zones and corridors, wherein economic activities are adjusted.</p> <p>Under-represented biodiversity is studied and monitored on a systemic basis.</p> <p>Communities are engaged in ecologically compatible activities around PAs.</p> <p>The ABD program runs a dedicated biodiversity facility in Issyk-Kul region, with at least 500 people in rural areas benefiting from it. This serves as a lasting mechanism for funding alternative livelihoods for local communities that are beneficial to biodiversity. This will help to replicate the experience reaching out to over 1,000 recipients in the 7-10 years immediately after the project.</p>	<p>Increase in the PA system of Kyrgyzstan: by 2016 an additional 187,000 ha added to it (increase from 1.18 million ha to 1.38 million ha).</p> <p>The model for establishment of new PAs, buffer zones and corridors developed by the project will be incorporated in the government baseline Natural Resources Management program paving the way to further increase the national PA coverage up to 9% by 2020.</p> <p>Increased PA coverage of the range of the endangered snow leopard in the Central Tian Shan.</p> <p>METT introduced as a tool to monitor PA effectiveness and linked with improved biodiversity monitoring program at PAs in Central Tian Shan. Management effectiveness of newly established PA at least 45% by the end of the project (up from 0 at the start of the project).</p> <p>Better protection of globally threatened species listed in IUCN Red Data List - Snow leopard (<i>Uncia uncia</i>), Argali (<i>Ovis ammon</i>), Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) Chalepoxenus-leonomyrma (<i>Leptothorax longipilosus</i>)</p> <p>Better protection of species listed in national Red Data Book – Barbary Falcon (<i>Falco pelegrionides</i>), vulnerable endemic invertebrates such as Merzbacher's Apollo Butterfly (<i>Parnassius Apollo merzbacher</i>), Eurasian lynx (<i>Linx linx</i>), Pallas cat (<i>Otocolobus manul</i>), Brown Bear (<i>Ursus arctos isabellinus</i>), Beech marten (<i>Martes martes foina</i>), Ibisbill (<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>), Saker Falcon (<i>Falco cherrug</i>), Himalayan griffon (<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>), Eurasian Griffon (<i>Gyps fulvus</i>), Cinereous Vulture (<i>Aegypius monachus</i>), Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), Great Spotted Woodpecker (<i>Dendrocopos major</i>), Demoiselle-Crane (<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>), as well as CITES species such as Steppe Eagle (<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>), Eastern imperial Eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca Savigny</i>), and Short-toed Eagle (<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>).</p> <p>Contribution to CBD PoWPA (expansion of PAs, integration of PAs in wider landscapes, and community engagement schemes).</p>

**B.3. DESCRIBE THE SOCIOECONOMIC BENEFITS TO BE DELIVERED BY THE PROJECT AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF GENDER DIMENSIONS, AND HOW THESE WILL SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT BENEFITS. AS A BACKGROUND INFORMATION, READ [MAINSTREAMING GENDER AT THE GEF.](#)":**

Local / community benefits: The project includes extensive engagement of local communities and land users. Community leaders as well as local residents (livestock breeders, farmers, and hunters) will be trained in sustainable natural resource management and use (Output 2.5). The project will establish an enabling environment for alternative income generating activities, such as bee-keeping, yak breeding, ecological tourism, handicraft trade, which complement the overall goal of PA establishment. An expected increase in the incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible activities is assessed as by c. 10-15%, as mentioned in section B.2. Inclusion of these groups into the planning process of PA establishment and further in participatory PA management will serve the basis for local sustainable development (Output 1.2). The new PA will also create new job opportunities for experienced local community members that are intimately aware of local natural conditions (including former poachers) to guard and monitor biodiversity. To sustain pasture management as a means to stop and reverse land degradation, the GEF project will build the capacity of local community leaders and members of pasture committees through the participatory development and implementation of PA buffer zone pasture inventory and management plans.

Gender benefits: The GEF project will support ecological tourism services development (accommodation, catering, and souvenirs trade) and the harvesting and processing of non-timber forest products (berries, mushrooms, medicinal herbs), which are activities that local women are engaged in. For instance, the promotion of community-based, ecological tourism services will have spin-off

benefits for women who process wool into traditional Kyrgyz carpets and felt products; process milk into Kyrgyz cream, butter, cheese and kymyz (smoked horse milk); produce honey; prepare national cuisine, and such. All these income-generating activities are still the forte of rural women who will directly benefit from the support the project will provide to such activities.

**Sustainability.** The operational and financial sustainability of the PAs in Central Tian Shan upon withdrawal of GEF investment will be ensured by commitment of Government to allocate core financing for PAs needed for their optimal management after the project ends. Furthermore, the integration of resource use restrictions into land-use plans (Output 2.3) will put permanence to the biodiversity compatible way of using resources in the buffer zones and corridors in Central Tian Shan.

**B.4. INDICATE RISKS, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS AND MEASURES THAT ADDRESS THESE RISKS:**

Risk	Level	Mitigation
Difficulties in designation of protected area, buffer zones and corridors due to restrictions in land-use regulations.	M	The review of national legislation with a view to introduce the concepts of buffer zones and corridors is already underway, which is providing the starting basis for addressing this risk. Furthermore, in the preparation of the project, the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry and WWF have discussed the allocation of land for the new protected area with local stakeholders, agricultural, forestry and hunting authorities, as well as with the Land Cadaster, and there is initial consensus for the establishment of the new PA, conditional upon GEF support at the PPG and project implementation stage. Under Component I, a new protected area will be established without relocation of local residents and with their full participation in the discussion of resource use regimes. With respect to buffer zones and corridors, the policy and regulatory basis for their designation will be finalized through Output 2.1, followed by extensive consultations with local administrations and communities regarding new regimes for pasture management and hunting, other resource use restrictions, as well as economic alternatives to be rendered through Output 2.5. Upon consensus, corresponding changes to land-use plans will be effected and registered in the Land Cadaster. The project does not envisage re-classification of lands between categories (i.e. to reclassify forest land as agricultural, or vice versa), and hence it will not require approval from the Cabinet of Ministers which could jeopardize the project or substantially delay it.
Difficulties in starting up the investment and business support program for local communities	M	Investment funds managed by district administrations have existed in Kyrgyzstan for some time. However, introducing biodiversity-friendly businesses through this mechanism is recognized to be a novel approach with some degree of associated risk. The <u>operational</u> difficulties would not bar the activity, since it will be based on the existing institutional, financial and operational mechanisms set up between UNDP Kyrgyzstan and local administrations for managing district-level investment funding (through micro-credit) and creating sustainable demand for small and medium businesses in rural areas (through the UNDP practice of business incubators). However, there is a <u>market</u> risk involved, since the project will propose a set of businesses not widely tested by investment and business incubator programs before. There is a risk connected to the uncertainty about: whether there is going to be a demand for this type of support, whether in case of weak demand it could be stimulated by extension support and hand-holding from UNDP, what could be acceptable terms of micro-crediting, what would be the collateral or guarantee backup for micro-credit, and what system would need to be in place to monitor the ecological and financial compliance. There are two factors that help mitigate these risks: (1) Firstly, there is a successful community based tourism program run by WWF, which has issued subsidies to communities for ecological and agro-tourism. The WWF research indicates that the demand for this and other types of alternative resource uses is robust, and specifically in landscapes which lend themselves well to tourism, and Tian Shan is the leading landscape in this regard. WWF analysis proves that in Tian Shan at least 500 people with high willingness to take micro-credit can be targeted by this type of assistance; (2) As part of ABD planning, and with support from GEF, UNDP would conduct meticulous analysis of the risk, and would define the details of proposed investment and business support activities during the PPG stage. If the level of uncertainty proves to be high, this will be duly reflected in the PPG report and the activity would not be proposed for the full stage of implementation. The <u>capitalization</u> issue is considered to be low-risk, since the baseline funds in question are allocated by district level authorities as part of routine budget planning, and will be topped up by UNDP funding from its baseline ABD program. These funds would be available provided GEF incrementally covers the support functions of marketing, outreach, and compliance monitoring.
Influence of climate change contributes to rapid degradation of the biodiversity of Central Tian Shan's ecosystems.	L	According to dominating scenarios, changes in the species compositions in most ecosystems of Kyrgyzstan will not be catastrophic. In the mountains the rise in the temperature is expected to be mitigated by elevated humidity and relief conditions. Mammals with a large home range, endemic vegetation (including the relict spruce forest) are most vulnerable to predicted aridization of climate and shift in ecological zones, but will be able to adapt provided that they have space for movement. This is one of the key reasons that the project has chosen to emphasize landscape-level actions together with protected area expansion. The project will enable the emergence of a supportive matrix of land uses, including the ecological corridors to connect protected areas. In addition, this approach will limit climate change risk by providing pathways along macro-climatic and upland-lowland gradients to enable species movement in a context of potentially shifting ecological zones.

**B.5. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT INCLUDING THE PRIVATE SECTOR, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES, AS APPLICABLE:**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>Government agencies</b>	
State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry under The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (SAEPF)	Main implementation partner assuring improvement of national policy and legislation on biodiversity conservation; organization of new PA; as well as managerial and financial sustainability of the national PA system; all PAs are accountable to SAEPF (Outputs 1.1-1.4).
State Registration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (SRS)	SRS will coordinate and control the registration of land property rights in the vicinity of the project site. Within its mandate, it is responsible for the following: 1) regulating of land relations (state registration deed, land cadaster) in the new PA , corridors and buffer zone (Output 2.2) 2) topography survey and mapping of the PA to prepare state registration deed for land users (ibid)
State Agency on Regional Development, Investments, and Construction	Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management issues into local development plans and their further implementation (Output 2.3)
Province and District administrations	Support to the establishment of the new PA and integration of biodiversity conservation into corresponding development strategies and plans (Outputs 1.1 and 2.3)
<b>Local communities</b>	
Local Self Governance Bodies	Elaboration and implementation of the local communities' development strategies including local environment issues. They will be among the main project implementing partners at the local level in buffer zones and corridors in the vicinity of PAs (Output 1.2, Outputs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)
Associations of Pasture and Water Users	They are the users of ecosystem services regulating access of local communities to natural resources and sustainable use of biodiversity and they will provide inputs to the development of the landscape level management plan for Tian Shan that defines buffer zones and conservation-friendly uses in sensitive areas, as well as play a role in the development and implementation of alternative sustainable livelihoods (Outputs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)
Communities of the PA buffer zones	Active users of ecosystem services and to be involved in PA management and sustainable use practices to be promoted by the project (Outputs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5).
<b>Non-government organizations</b>	
BIOM NGO, Ecological Movement ALEINE	These organizations have been involved in the development of approaches to sustainable use of biodiversity for local development and the establishment of private bio reserves. They will play an important role in the implementation of the concept of public participation in biodiversity conservation (Output 1.2, 2.3, 2.4)
Association of Forest and Land Users of Kyrgyzstan	Integration of sustainable natural resource management to local development plans, improvement of the legal framework for biodiversity conservation, environmental education in schools, and replication of best practices in biodiversity conservation, awareness raising and community mobilization for biodiversity conservation in PA buffer zones and corridors (Outputs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4).
<b>Research and expertise</b>	
Two institutes of the National Science Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic: Biology and Soils Institute; Forest Research Institute	Based on their experience and expertise, these institutes will play a role in elaboration of the scientific grounds for biodiversity monitoring, improving participation in biodiversity inventory, development of biodiversity sustainable use norms, identification of the areas under strong pressure, PA management effectiveness assessment (Outputs 1.1, 1.3).
<b>Private sector</b>	
Hunting tour operators	They are active users of the fauna and are to be involved in the development and implementation of sustainable hunting practices, conservation-friendly alternative income-generating opportunities promoted by the project, and will also provide inputs and perspectives on local community user rights in developing amendments to the PA law on defining buffer zones and permitted uses (Outputs 2.1, 2.5).
Wild fruit processing units and pharmaceutical association	They are active users of the flora and are to be involved in the development and implementation of conservation-friendly alternative income-generating opportunities promoted by the project, and will also provide inputs and perspectives on local community user rights in developing amendments to the PA law on defining buffer zones and permitted uses (Outputs 2.1, 2.5).
Kyrgyz association of community based tourism (KACBT)	To be involved in training of local communities to develop ecological tourism facilities and infrastructure as well as marketing of such community-based tours (Output 2.5).

**B.6. OUTLINE THE COORDINATION WITH OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES:**

The GEF project will be in line with and will build on the Central Asia Eco-Net. An ecosystem gaps analysis was conducted, and the natural habitats and range of rare and endangered species was studied, among other things. A map of Kyrgyzstan's network of PAs has also been developed at 1:500,000 and 1:100,000 scales. GIS data from this exercise has been shared with all stakeholders. The scheme for the Kyrgyzstan Eco-Net has been adopted at the national level by the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF)<sup>9</sup>, and at the regional level by the Resolution of the Inter State Committee on Sustainable Development as a basis for extension of the country's PA system ("econet cores") and for sustainable land management ("econet corridors and buffer zones")<sup>10</sup>. Eco-Net development has been also integrated into the Regional Environment Protection Action Plan (REPAP) as the main component to assure biodiversity conservation.<sup>11</sup> These activities provide an important foundation for the proposed project and close links will be maintained with the several local NGOs and CBOs that have been involved in this exercise.

The ongoing GEF-funded project on conservation of the piscifauna of Issyk-Kul Lake while located in the same geographic region has a different substantive focus from the proposed project inasmuch as it is focusing on challenges and opportunities for a biodiversity-friendly fisheries management regime on the Issyk-Kul Lake. However, in terms of the modalities it is using to engage local communities in conservation decision-making, there are important collaboration opportunities. The two project teams will, therefore, participate in each other's steering committees under the guidance of the UNDP Country Office.

The other significant initiative with which the proposed project will maintain close contact is the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), which is a partnership dedicated to combating land degradation and improving rural livelihoods. Kyrgyzstan is part of this initiative together with the other Central Asian countries. While CACILM is focused primarily on desertification and sustainable land management issues, it is also developing recommendations on sustainable use of natural resources and maintenance of ecosystem integrity in mountain ecosystems, which is of particular relevance to the proposed project. The proposed project will use the CACILM platform for dissemination of knowledge and replication of the project strategy outside the immediate project areas within Kyrgyzstan and beyond to other Central Asian countries.

The proposed project will also coordinate with a Government of Kyrgyzstan project that is receiving technical support from JICA and has successfully promoted decentralized joint forest management. Under this project, a stakeholder decision-making platform has been established for management of productive forests. The project will draw on lessons learnt to transfer such experiences and practices to increasing stakeholder involvement in management of the PAs, buffer zones and corridors in Central Tian Shan.

In terms of coordination with past and ongoing, small-scale, conservation and sustainable use activities at the community level, the many years of experience of the GEF-SGP in Kyrgyzstan will be tapped to increase the effectiveness of alternative sustainable livelihoods to be supported by the proposed project. The National GEF-SGP Coordinator will be invited to participate in the project's Steering Committee. Similarly, coordination will be maintained with the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) that supports activities aimed at reducing poverty and improving standards of living in mountainous communities, while at the same time protecting local ecosystems within snow leopard habitat. Their experiences and lessons will be considered and replicated where possible. Past community-based conservation initiatives of SLT in the project area will be revived, and local expertise developed under those initiatives will be tapped during project implementation.

### **C. DESCRIBE THE GEF AGENCY'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROJECT:**

Biodiversity conservation and expansion of PAs in particular is one of the key programming pillars of UNDP. In the Europe and CIS region, UNDP is implementing over 35 GEF-funded biodiversity conservation projects through its network of 22 Country Offices. Under the protected area theme, UNDP-GEF activities are seeking to strengthen the management effectiveness of PA systems, improving PA governance, improving PA finance and integrating PA management into national and territorial development. UNDP-Kyrgyzstan has been playing a key role among all UN agencies and international organizations contributing to transformational changes in biodiversity conservation. It has been successfully managing a portfolio of technical assistance and capacity building initiatives in the areas of biodiversity conservation, prevention of land degradation, and watershed management, with environmental projects representing more than 60% of its portfolio. In the context of biodiversity conservation and PA expansion and management, in recent years, UNDP-Kyrgyzstan has played an instrumental role in the following: (i) analysis of the state of biodiversity conservation efforts and PA systems in the country in 2006 and in 2009, as part of the preparation of the National Reports to the UNCBD, which, in turn, helped the government define its baseline programming in biodiversity conservation; (ii) improvement of the Law on "Protected Areas", and the Law on "Sustainable development of ecological and economic system of Issyk Kul" that establishes an enabling framework for biodiversity conservation and empowering statute for this biosphere territory; and (iii) establishment of the special biodiversity-friendly fishery regime in the Issyk-Kul Lake reducing invasive species pressure through artificial propagation of endemics. In addition to its efforts in biodiversity conservation, UNDP Kyrgyzstan's work in related natural resource management fields also bolsters its ability to realize cross-focal area synergies. It has extensive experience in sustainable management of mountain rangelands with particular consideration given to wildlife habitats. It is also a leading country office for the regional CACILM Capacity Building project that promotes sustainable land management practices and an ecosystem approach to landscape management. Integrated Water Resource Management is another focus of UNDP support to the government with support being given to create and operationalize River Basin Councils. This experience with community-wide decision-making mechanisms lends itself to replication in the context of PA and landscape management.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Sustainable Development Steering Committee of the SAEPF meeting №3 as of 03.06.2006, SAEPF Service Note №156 as of 06.07.2006

<sup>10</sup> Resolution of the ISCS D №3 as of 16.11.2007

<sup>11</sup> WWF (2006), ECONET Life net of Central Asia, Moscos, <http://www.wwf.ru/resources/publ/book/179> <http://www.wwf.ru/resources/publ/book/eng/179>

Similarly, its work on payments for ecosystem services within the regional Central Asia Climate Risks Management Programme, and its work with UNEP under the Poverty Environment Initiative to highlight the link between poverty alleviation and ecosystem services will strengthen community engagement activities proposed under the project both in PA management and sustainable natural resource use in the vicinity of PAs.

**C.1. INDICATE THE CO-FINANCING AMOUNT THE GEF AGENCY IS BRINGING TO THE PROJECT:**

UNDP has brokered US\$ 4.2 million for this project from multiple sources, to be confirmed during further project preparation. This includes a US\$ 1.6 million allocation by UNDP to the project.

**C.2. HOW DOES THE PROJECT FIT INTO THE GEF AGENCY’S PROGRAM (REFLECTED IN DOCUMENTS SUCH AS UNDAF, CAS, ETC.) AND STAFF CAPACITY IN THE COUNTRY TO FOLLOW UP PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:**

The project is congruent with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Kyrgyzstan (2012-2016) insofar as it will contribute specifically to the UNDAF target – “by 2016 sustainable management of energy, environment and natural resources practices are operationalized”. The project will also contribute to Outcome 6 of UNDP’s Country Programme Action Plan under which UNDP will “integrate principles of environmental sustainability and ecosystem approach into national, sectoral and local development plans involving governmental agencies, private sector, NGOs/ CBOs, and farmers with special attention to sustainable financing tools and mechanisms that can increase government spending for biodiversity conservation, as well as to pilot models for land use planning and management and landscape conservation”. UNDP- Kyrgyzstan has a permanent unit of 8 staff members successfully managing a portfolio of technical assistance and capacity building initiatives in the areas of biodiversity conservation, prevention of land degradation, and climate change (plus support from operations and senior management). This team is supported by the UNDP/ GEF Regional Coordination Unit in Bratislava composed of 14 technical advisers (most of them Russian speaking) and support staff assisting with M&E and delivery oversight, among other tasks.


**PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT AND GEF AGENCY**

**A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT:** (Please attach the [Operational Focal Point endorsement letter\(s\)](#) with this template).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)
Baianbek Kadyrov	Head, GEF OFP	State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry	12/05/2011

**B. GEF AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for project identification and preparation.

Agency Coordinator, name	Signature	Date	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email Address
Yannick Glemarec, UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator		March 26, 2012	Maxim Vergeichik, RTA, EBD	+ 421 259 337 152	<a href="mailto:maxim.vergeichik@undp.org">maxim.vergeichik@undp.org</a>